The Egyptian Information Society Initiative

"To invest in the technological industry is to invest without the least hesitation in Egypt's future, particularly in view of the fact that the promising beginnings we have already seen reaffirm that Egypt has the capability of catching up with this significant development."

President Mohamed Hosni Mubarak
13th of September 1999

Developing Egypt into an Information Society is a top priority. With these key words, Egypt's President Mubarak gave impetus to the development of information and communication technologies (ICT) in Egypt, linking them to the economic and social development of the country. The government of Egypt as a major stakeholder in the global Information Society is committed to building an Egyptian Information Society, offering every individual, business and community the opportunity to harness the benefits of the new information era to achieve national priorities.

The Cabinet Information and Decision Support Center (IDSC) was established by the Egyptian government in 1985 to build up Egypt's IT industry and governmental decision support infrastructure. IDSC evolved from the Government's commitment to join the international IT revolution. One of its primary objectives was to provide public access to information, with a particular emphasis on aiding business and investment. Over the past eighteen years, IDSC has successfully implemented many IT projects in legislative reform, public sector reform, human resources development and job creation, access to the Internet, commercial registration, natural resources management, cultural heritage preservation, urban planning, and sectoral development projects at the ministerial and governorates level, among many other areas. IDSC is currently focusing on decision support for the Cabinet.

In September 1999, President Mubarak announced the inauguration of a national program for the development of the communication and information technology sector. The national program goals were to create the Information Society in Egypt, and an export oriented ICT industry. In October 1999, a new Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT) was formed to facilitate Egypt's transition into the global Information Society.

The new ministry was charged with the task of creating an Egyptian Information Society and began its work by preparing the National Plan for Communications and Information Technology. MCIT's projects are geared towards supporting and empowering the Information Society in Egypt in close coordination with relevant government agencies and with the private sector. These commitments have been translated into developing and expanding the telecommunications infrastructure, establishing hundreds of information technology clubs, expanding the pool of IT skilled labor and creating national information systems and databases.

The National Plan for Communications and Information Technology has paved the way for the initiation of the Egyptian Information Society Initiative (EISI), which has been structured around seven major related tracks, each designed, when fully implemented, to help bridge the digital divide and facilitate Egypt's evolution into an Information Society.

E-Readiness: Equal Access for All

The Information Society should enable all citizens to have easy and affordable access to the opportunities offered by new technologies. Developing an appropriate communication infrastructure is a prerequisite for achieving this universal access.

E-Learning: Nurturing Human Capital

ICT is a complementary tool for higher standards of education at all levels and for upgrading the skills and productivity of the citizenry. This initiative aims to promote the use of ICT in education and to develop a new generation of citizens who understand and are comfortable with the use of ICT in their daily lives.

E-Government: Government Now Delivers

The Information Society should be able to deliver high quality government services to the public where they are and in the format that suits them. The goal of this initiative is to reach a new level of convenience in government services, offer citizens the opportunity to share in the decision making process, and greatly improve efficiency and quality.

E-Business: A New Way of Doing Business

ICT is an important tool for robust economic growth. With the creation of new technology-based firms, the improvement of workforce skills, the use of electronic documents, and the development of e-payment infrastructure, ICT can be a significant catalyst to increase employment, create new jobs and improve the competitiveness of Egyptian industries. This initiative is designed to foster the creation of a new industry evoloution in e-commerce and e-business.

E-Health: Increasing Health Services Availability

The application of ICT in the health sector could provide a better quality of life to the citizens and a more efficient work environment for physicians and health care workers. ICT can be used wherever it has a clear added value, such as reaching remote populations, providing continuous training for doctors, and offering the tools for building a national health network.

E-Culture: Promoting Egyptian Culture

ICT is used to document Egyptian cultural identity through the use of tools to preserve manuscripts, archives and index materials, offer worldwide access to cultural and historical materials, and generate and promote interest in Egyptian cultural life and heritage.

ICT Export Initiative: Industry Development

This initiative is designed to foster the creation of an export-oriented ICT industry. The development of an ICT industry can be a powerful engine for export growth and job creation.